

LAS VIRGENES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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CURRICULUM COUNCIL MEETING

October 19, 2021

Present: Su Baird, Bella Bernt, Sophie Bassari, Melissa Brennan, Kirby Brock, Marnie Davis, Karrie DeMarco, Dana Dickson, Marlene Didierjean, Sara Exner, Dr. Clara Finneran, Willow Gavin, Sheri Given, Jessica Guenther, Nicole Goldstein, Ashley Goulet, Christina Heredia, Jeannie Hoffman, Tina Johnson, Paula Johnson, Amber Juarez, Laura Kintz, Jim Klein, Doug Kohno, Kelly Lampert, Thomas Liu, Leslie Martinez, Dr. Stephanie McClay, Pam McDonnell, Elizabeth Melnick, Dina Moran, Darci Miller, Michael Robkin, Amy Rosen, Pamela Rudy, Allison Stein, Lesli Stein, Amy Strachman Borsell, Courtney Peoples, Lila Rahimi, Sandra Ritvo, Monette Thomas, Carrie Trupp, Dr. Kate Vadehra, Heather Wassenberg, Dana Weber, Adam Weinstein, Emily Wigger, Melanie Wright

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Dr. Finneran. Dr. Finneran welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the year, thanked them for generously contributing their time to this important work and asked each member present to introduce themselves.

Review Curriculum Council Bylaws

Dr. Finneran shared the Curriculum Council mission:

- Provide a forum within the district to study, analyze, discuss, and to ultimately recommend to the Board and the administration the possibilities and/or alternatives for curriculum matters in the District.
- Serve the District as the main vehicle to review and consider additions, deletions, and changes to the District's curricula.
- Provide representation of the viewpoints of all stakeholders within the district.

Overview of Accomplishments

Dr. Finneran highlighted the following goals which have been realized due largely in part to the support and work of the Curriculum Council Committee and the Board of Education:

- **Social Justice Three Year Plan**
 - **Social Justice Professional Development (PD)** - Implemented and offering ongoing PD to both certificated and classified staff.
 - **LVUSD Social Justice Standards** - Developed and adopted by the Board of Education in March, 2021.

- **Board Policy 0415: Equity** - Adopted by the Board of Education in October, 2020
- ***Social Justice Leadership in the US Elective Class*** - Conceptualized, approved and currently offering the new 11th/12th grade elective course *Social Justice Leadership in the US*. Melissa Brennan and Adam Weinstein shared an update on *Social Justice Leadership in the US*
 - Ms. Brennan and Mr. Weinstein shared how moving and humbling their experience has been engaging students and they could not be more pleased with how the course is going.
 - Students are having compassionate conversations, implementing critical analysis, and supporting their statements with facts.
 - Students are doing deep reflective work, not just having an opinion on what they see happening outside of themselves. They are willing to look inward and ask themselves where they are and where they position themselves within this work.
 - Ms. Brennan and Mr. Weinstein shared they would like more clarity on the expectations in terms of course load, as this is the first time they are teaching an elective class.
 - They are hoping to add a third book to the curriculum in the spring called, *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives*.
- **Ethnic Studies Update:** All school districts in the state of California need to offer an Ethnic Studies course by 2025. The Social Justice Leadership course has some of the elements of the Ethnic Studies course, but not all. Work of the Curriculum Council in coming years will include the development of an Ethnic Studies course according to state guidelines.
- **Social Studies/History PD:** LVUSD has contracted with the UC Berkeley History-Social Science Project (USBHSSP) to provide professional development to a team of our history and social studies teachers representing grades 4 through 12. 25 teachers participated in the first PD session. Additional group sessions as well as site support/coaching, year-end teacher showcase and administrative planning meetings will also be provided.
- **Major Library Investments:** Thousands of new books have arrived in every school site library with themes aligned to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Action.
- **Expanded Access to Counselors and Counseling Services:**
 - Full-time counselors at each elementary school
 - High schools have specialized counseling personnel: 2 college and career specialists; 2 social emotional specialists; and 2 academic specialists at each high school
 - High school appointments can be made via an online app
 - Two centralized wellness counselors are supporting high needs students throughout the district
- **Social-Emotional Learning Focus** - Implementing the RULER Framework, a social-emotional learning approach from Yale University. As part of this implementation, Mood Meter posters and postcards have been distributed to schools as a visual reference to help students recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions. PD is being offered to support this effort/framework.
- **K-12 VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) Expansion**
 - One teacher per school K-5; this is a significant increase to staffing from years past
 - K-12 team is working with Ms. Kintz and one another to align standards and curriculum
 - Integration of SEL through VAPA lessons

- **New Teacher Coaching** Three new full time new teacher coaches: Kristy Kaufman, Carina Diana, and Curran Cummings
 - All new teachers are receiving weekly coaching, model lessons, and support
 - Observations, demonstrations, and ongoing PD

Goals for This Year's Work

1. There are a few future adoptions which will be up for review/development in conjunction with our schools and department leaders. These include:
 - a. Secondary ELA - Grades 6th through 8 currently use an open-source adoption that is constantly evolving and shifting, and grades 9 through 11 use Study Sync, and our subscription to the materials expires in June of 2022.
 - b. Maravillas, the ELA program used at Sumac Elementary will be up for adoption in June of 2022.
 - c. Several middle school math textbooks are up for adoption in 2023, and a statewide new Math Framework is expected sometime in 2022. It is likely that LVUSD will partner with The Curtis Center of UCLA to simultaneously: do some standards-curriculum mapping, develop understanding of the new statewide framework, and consider materials that will be available/best suited for our needs for adoption.
 - d. District and site level staff will work strategically on the above issues, and will keep Curriculum Council apprised.
2. Enter year 2, and add year 4, to the Social Justice Three-Year Plan.
3. RULER Pilot - Willow Elementary is doing a deep-dive pilot with the RULER framework.
4. CTE/Engineering - We are working with our Performing Arts Education Centers (PAECs) and high school leaders to develop an engineering pathway.
5. Service Learning Requirement Review- Dr. Gleason summarized our current Service Learning graduation requirement, which equals 15 hours per high school year, and/or 60 hours total. This requirement was put on hold due to the Pandemic. Dr. Gleason shared that while the spirit of this policy is to expose students to noble, worthwhile work, the implementation can be difficult. An eight-year case study of this graduation requirement utilizing Pre-Covid data, showed about 400 students ended up off track for graduation in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades, totaling 1200 total students who were off track to graduate because of the service learning requirement. Historically, LVUSD counseling and administrative team leaders have done a tremendous job supporting the students to reduce this number to around 22 students at the time of graduation. This change is something the District is considering through multiple Board committees, including Pathways and the Safety and Wellness Committees. Staff will be working closely with the high school administrative teams, their staff members and students to actively explore what service-learning can look like post Covid.

Other Business - Question Posed to Committee by Dr. Finneran

At the end of this school year, what specific accomplishments would you like to see Curriculum Council have achieved? Prioritize these accomplishments. Various members shared the following:

- Supporting a process whereby core and supplemental materials are clear to teachers and processes to add/edit these lists of materials are clarified (i.e. some teachers would like to add certain books to be used)
- Prioritize Social Justice Standards

- Implementation of the Social Justice Standards; integrating student feedback as to the challenges they see and how they can be best supported by sites and the District
- Add Year 4 to Social Justice Three-Year Plan
- Update Health curriculum
- Discussions to integrate computer science, computational thinking and coding into elementary math curriculum
- More information/focus and an equitable pathway to writing as students move into secondary school
- Digital Literacy - evaluating/utilizing online information
- Feedback on the new Social Justice Leadership class
- For elementary school, the emotional and mental well-being of the children is of great importance to address.

Dr. Finneran shared that LVUSD staff and the Council, while they'd like to achieve everything, need to remain focused on a few key initiatives, especially during this time of returning to school full time. She said that the adoptions (including core/supplemental material conversations), the continuation of the Social Justice Plan, and the ongoing implementation of social-emotional learning are likely more than enough for staff and the Council. Ms. Kintz noted that the CCC (K-5 ELA) curriculum has a strong writing component, and she and Dr. Finneran shared that teachers have access to digital literacy curriculum, which has become more and more integrated into all teaching over the past 5 or so years.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm. The council meets next on December 7 at 3:30 pm.